

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

CU-02 OMB-01 /064 W

----- 123171

R 041156Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9600

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 5026

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV TH PINS PINT

SUBJ: ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO ELECTION DIRECTOR YUWARIT KAMONWET, 2363 CANDIDATES WILL RUN IN THE APRIL 4 ELECTIONS. NEW FORCE PARTY EXPECTED TO PICK UP SEATS. MORAL SOVEREIGNTY PARTY TO BATTLE SOCIALIST BLOC IN NORTHEAST. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY RESURGES. PEOPLE'S FORCE SEES ITSELF AS THE CONSERVATIVE ANSWER TO THE NEW FORCE PARTY. CONSULATES REPORT SAP/TN ELECTROAL AGREEMENT NOT WORKING WELL. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE ELECTION BUREAU OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, THE OFFICIAL FIGURES OF CANDIDATES RUNNING AS OF MARCH 2 IS 2363. ORIGINALLY, 2470 REGISTERED TO RUN, OF WHOM ONE HUNDRED WERE DISQUALIFIED FOR VARIOUS REASONS. ANOTHER SEVEN WITHDREW FROM THE RACE. THESE FIGURES MAY CHANGE, SINCE A CANDIDATE MAY WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE AT ANY TIME UP UNTIL ELECTION DAY.

2. A CURSORY GLANCE AT THE STATISTICS AND THE UNOFFICIAL LIST OF THE CANDIDATES (WE ARE NOW TOLD A COMPLETE, CONFIDENTIAL

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NATIONWIDE OFFICIAL LIST WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL

THE END OF THIS MONTH, ABOUT 10 DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION) INDICATES THAT ABOUT 65 PERCENT OF THE CANDIDATES DID NOT RUN IN THE 1975 GENERAL ELECTIONS. OF THE 269 MP'S IN THE LAST PARLIAMENT, 240 HAVE OPTED TO RUN AGAIN THIS YEAR. DESPITE THE FACT THAT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR BARELY ENDED THREE MONTHS AGO, THERE IS NOT A GREAT NUMBER OF WOMEN STANDING FOR ELECTION. ONLY 62 ARE RUNNING, INCLUDING THE ONLY THREE INCUMBENT WOMEN MP'S. LAST YEAR 59 WOMEN MADE THE ATTEMPT.

3. AS INDICATED IN A PREVIOUS TELEGRAM THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IS ABOUT 170 HIGHER THAN LAST YEAR, AND THE NUMBER OF PARTIES ONLY FOUR LESS THAN LAST YEAR. THE DEMOCRAT, SOCIAL ACTION, THAI NATION, NEW FORCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTIES HAVE FIELDDED CANDIDATES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, ALTHOUGH NO PARTY HAS PUT UP DANDIDATES IN ALL 279 CONTESTS. SOME OF THE OTHER PARTIES HAVE OPTED TO CONCENTRATE ON ONE OR TWO PARTICULAR REGIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE SOCIALIST UNITED FRONT, LED BY KHLAEO NORAPATI, WILL FIELD OVER 75 PERCENT OF ITS TOTAL OF 37 CANDIDATES (VICE 74 IN 1975) IN ITS STRONGHOLD OF THE NORTHEAST, WITH ONLY TOKEN EFFORTS IN THE OTHER REGIONS. THE RIGHT WING, NAWAPHON-BACKED MORAL SOVEREIGNTY PARTY (THAMMATHIPATAI) IS FIELDING 50 PERCENT OF ITS 110 CANDIDATES IN THE NORTHEAST, WITH ANOTHER 20 PERCENT IN THE NORTH AND A LIKE PERCENTAGE IN THE CENTRAL REGION. IT INTENDS TO CAPITALIZE ON THE FALL OF LAOS TO THE COMMUNISTS BY PUSHING THE THEME THAT SOCIALISM IS THE SAME AS COMMUNISM. THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND (SPT) IS ALSO RUNNING 50 PERCENT OF ITS CANDIDATES IN THE NORTHEAST BUT IT IS ALSO MAKING A STRONG EFFORT IN THE SOUTH, COINCIDENTALLY IN THOSE AREAS WHICH THE RTG CONSIDERS PROBLEM AREAS FROM THE SECURITY STANDPOINT. ALTHOUGH PLEADING POVERTY, THE SPT IS FIELDING 25 CANDIDATES, UP FROM 82 IN 1975. AS OF LAST REPORT, THE SPT HAD NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO WITHDRAW FROM THE ELECTION, FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF ITS SECRETARY GENERAL, DR. BUNSANONG, ON FEB 28.

4. THE NEW FORCE PARTY (NFP) HAS ALMOST DOUBLED ITS
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NUMBER OF CANDIDATES (204 VICE 106 LAST YEAR). IT IS EXPECTED TO CINCREASE ITS NUMBER OF ELECTED MP'S, BUT IT WOULD BE DOING WELL IF IT GAINED 20 SEATS IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. EVERYONE, INCLUDING THE DEMOCRATS, EXPECTS THE NFP TO GIVE THE DEMOCRATSHA HARD FIGHT IN BANGKOK, WHERE THE DEMOCRATS HAVE RULED SUPREME FOR MANY YEARS.

5. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (SJP) HAS FIELDLED A SURPRISING NUMBER OF CANDIDATES, 203, ONLY 30 LESS THAN LAST YEAR. THE PARTY WAS SO WRACKED WITH DISSENSION DURING THE PAST YEAR THAT MANY EXPECTED THE PARTY TO DISINTEGRATE IN THE FACE OF NEW ELECTIONS. ONE REASON IT DID NOT DO SO, IT APPEARS, WAS THE DECISION OF FORMER SUPREME COMMANDER, ACM THAWI CHUNLASAP, TO BECOME THE PARTY LEADER OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY, REPLACING THAWIT KLINPRATHUM. HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF SJP CANDIDATES IS LESS THAN MEETS THE EYE. THE SJP IS RUNNING SEVERAL "PRO-FORMA" CANDIDATES, THAT IS, CANDIDATES WHO HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF WINNING BUT WHO WILL DRESS UP THE IMAGE OF THE PARTY. IN THIS CATEGORY ARE SIX YOUNG UNIVERSITY WOMEN. THE CHANCES THAT THE SJP WILL MATCH ITS 1975 PERFORMANCE, WHEN IT WON 45 SEATS, ARE SLIM SINCE MANY OF THEIR TOP VOTEGETTERS, "BUFFALO THIEVES" THOUGH THEY MAY BE, DEFECTED TO OTHER PARTIES, IN PARTICULAR THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY.

6. THE PEOPLE'S FORCE PARTY (PHALANG PRACHACHON), WHICH IS FIELDING A SURPRISING NUMBER OF CANDIDATES (151 THIS YEAR VS. 12 LAST YEAR), HAS ATTEMPTED TO SELL ITSELF AS THE CONSERVATIVE ANSWER TO THE LIBERAL NEW FORCE PARTY. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS PROBABLE THAT THE PFP HAS BEEN ABLE TO FIELD THIS LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES BECAUSE OF SUPPORT FROM FORMER POLICE GENERAL PRASOET RUCHIRAWONG, WHO WAS THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL POLICE FOR MANY YEARS DURING THE THAMON-PRAPHAT REGIME, THROUGH SUKHIT PATCHIMSAWASAT, DEPUTY PARTY LEADER AND SON OF POL LTG KRIT PATCHIMSAWAT. THIS PARTY IS FIELDING CANDIDATES IN ALL REGIONS BUT IS CONCENTRATING ITS EFFORTS IN THE NORTHEAST AND THE NORTH.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

CU-02 OMB-01 /064 W

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R 041156Z MAR 76

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INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. THE CONSULATES REPORT THAT IN THE PROVINCES THE SOCIAL ACTION-THAI NATION AGREEMENT TO COOPERATE IN THE APRIL 4 ELECTION IS NOT WORKING WELL. STATISTICS PROVIDED BY THE ELECTION BUREAU APPEAR TO BEAR THIS OUT. IN 60 OF THE 119 CONSTITUENCIES THROUGHOUT THAILAND THE TWO PARTIES ARE RUNNING CANDIDATES AGAINST EACH OTHER, (E.G., IN A TWO SEAT CONSTITUENCY BOTH PARTIES ARE FIELDING TWO CANDIDATES EACH). IN 33 OTHER CONSTITUENCIES THE COMBINED NUMBER OF SAP AND TN CANDIDATES EXCEEDS THE NUMBER OF SEATS CONTESTED; AND IN ONLY 26 CONSTITUENCIES DOES THE COMBINED TOTAL OF SAP AND TN CANDIDATES NOT REAPPROXIMATELY EXCEED THE NUMBER OF SEATS AVAILABLE. THE TWO PARTIES ARE THUS DIRECTLY CONTESTING FOR VOTES IN 93 ELECTORAL RACES. HOWEVER, THE EXTENT OF COOPERATION VARIES DEPENDING ON THE ELECTORATE, THE CANDIDATES AND THE SITUATION IN DIFFERENT CONSTITUENCIES. IN SOME AREAS THE TWO PARTIES, FOR REASONS OF LOCAL PRESTIGE, HAVE FIELDED CANDIDATES WITH ONLY SLENDER PROSPECTS FOR ELECTION, EVEN IF THEY WERE NOT COMPETING AGAINST EACH OTHER. THE CONSEQUENCES MAY NOT BE AS SIGNIFICANT AS THE FIGURES IMPLY.

8. IN BANGKOK COOPERATION APPEARS TO BE AT A HIGH
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LEVEL. OF THE 10 CONSTITUENCIES HERE, SAP AND TN CANDIDATES ARE NOT COMPETING AGAINST EACH OTHER IN FOUR OF THEM. IN PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT'S ELECTORAL DISTRICT COOPERATION HAS GONE AS FAR AS HAVING KHUKRIT'S PICTURE IN A THAI NATION PARTY HANDOUT. HE IS THE ONLY SAP CANDIDATE IN A THREE SEAT DISTRICT, IN WHICH THE THAI NATION IS FIELDING ONLY TWO CANDIDATES, BOTH INCUMBENTS. IN FOUR OTHER CONSTITUENCIES THE TWO PARTIES COMBINED ARE FIELDING MORE CANDIDATES THAN SEATS AVAILABLE, AND IN ONLY TWO ARE THE TWO PARTIES IN HEAD TO HEAD COMPETITION.

9. IN A SUBSEQUENT TELEGRAM THE EMBASSY WILL EXPLORE THIS COMPETITION IN GREATER DEPTH AND DETAIL.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION FORECASTS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BANGKO05026
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760082-1109
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760397/aaaadhbj.tel
Line Count: 220
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <01 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO ELECTION DIRECTOR YUWARIT KAMONWET
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, TH, (YUWARIT KAMONWET)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006